



DEEPWATER NEWS

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Legacy assets may be first to see changes, upgrades

Though the Integrated Deepwater System award date is rapidly approaching, it can take years for new cutters and aircraft to make it into the hands of operators in the field. One of the guiding principles of the Deepwater approach is to maintain and upgrade those existing assets until the new fleet goes into operation.

The three industry teams competing for the final contract, to be awarded during the third quarter of FY02, were given volumes of detailed information, including a guidebook that details the current state of Coast Guard hardware, personnel and technology, and one that lays out the Service's missions of the 21st Century. Each team will ultimately provide a fully integrated system of ships, aircraft and technology, but may also consider how current cutters and aircraft are upgraded to meet today's operational demands.

In some cases, those existing cutters and aircraft, commonly referred to as 'legacy assets,' may receive technology upgrades, be identified for yard periods for extensive overhauls or decommissioned altogether if upgrades are deemed too expensive or not beneficial to the overall integration schedule. Each team's proposal may differ in its schedule, amount of refurbishment for each class of asset or amount of money to be dedicated to legacy assets, but it's reasonable to assume each will address the current operational challenges facing cutter and aircraft crews today.

"Industry's challenge is to make keep us operationally effective today, tomorrow and 25 years from now," said Master Chief Petty Officer John Rector, a member of the Deepwater Surface Technical Assessment Team. "The winning Deepwater Industry Team, in conjunction with the Coast Guard, has to make the extremely difficult and many times controversial tradeoff decisions with regard to upgrading legacy surface assets and the cost effectiveness balance of designing, constructing, and testing & evaluating of future deepwater surface assets. The implementation of new surface deepwater assets is of vital importance but Coast Guard personnel in the fleet and the American public must realize that recapitalization the Coast Guards Deepwater assets will take time."

As Deepwater marches forward, other directorates within the Coast Guard are also moving forward with upgrades and refurbishments. One HH-65A Dolphin helicopter has been identified as a test platform for increased power capabilities, with the results to be folded into the long-range Deepwater asset integration plan. In addition, supplemental funding made available late last year has been earmarked for much needed yard periods for the 110-foot Island Class patrol boats.

"Nothing is standing still waiting for Deepwater," said RADM Patrick M. Stillman, Program Executive Officer of the Deepwater Program. "Because our very existence is based on cross-directorate representation, we are able to funnel ongoing initiatives into the common goal that is Deepwater."

Questions or Comments? Please e-mail us at deepwater@comdt.uscg.mil